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**IN-FLIGHT REVIEW**

## **LNG in BC**

Can Liquefied Natural Gas Power  
a Province Forward?



FALL 2014 ISSN 1916-5080

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BY THE HON. RICH COLEMAN, B.C. DEPUTY PREMIER AND MINISTER OF ENERGY, MINES AND NATURAL GAS DEVELOPMENT

## LNG IN B.C.

**A LITTLE MORE** than a year ago Premier Christy Clark created the Ministry of Natural Gas Development with one focus – to develop a Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) industry in British Columbia.

Most British Columbians now know about LNG. Natural gas is cooled to -162 degrees Celsius, condensing it to 600 times its normal volume and liquefying it so that it is ready to ship anywhere in the world. LNG can turn our local resource into a global commodity.

Globally, demand for natural gas is rising. This is fueled by growth in emerging economies and countries such as Japan, Korea, India and China that are looking to replace traditional sources of energy such as nuclear and coal with a safer, cleaner alternative.

Natural gas, the cleanest burning fossil fuel, is already a key economic driver in our province, operating in B.C. for more than 50 years. The sector currently employs around 13,000 people and has added \$8.6 billion in direct revenue to the province over the last decade.

As the Minister responsible for developing LNG in our province, I devote my time to promoting this industry, strengthening relationships with proponents and communities, and working to secure international investment.

We now have 16 proposals for LNG export operations. While the interest has been tremendous, our goal remains to meet the BC Jobs Plan target of three facilities by 2020. This would increase natural gas production and provincial revenues.

We are reaching out to communities and providing grants to help them prepare for growth, working to make B.C.'s LNG facilities the cleanest in the world, connecting local companies to projects through Buy-LNG BC, aligning skills training to meet emerging LNG needs, and building relationships to ensure that First Nations benefit from this opportunity.

Companies have already invested over \$7 billion and they have people on the ground working throughout the province to prepare for the next stage of LNG development.



*The Hon. Rich Coleman, B.C. Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy, Mines and Natural Gas Development.*

As we focus on expanding further into the global market, B.C. will remain a leader in responsible energy development that supports economic growth here at home. This is B.C.'s wealth. Our natural gas resource belongs to British Columbians and we have mapped a path that will return the benefits for generations to come.

Over the next year we will see our province's LNG industry take form. We will introduce the LNG tax legislation this fall and begin to see final investment decisions from industry. These two events will be the catalyst that moves us from planning to implementation; to project development, job creation and unprecedented economic growth.

With a mature industry, a vast supply of natural gas and growing demand, our province is ready to build an energy resource that will help fuel our world for the next 150 years. ➤



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## NEW & NOTABLE

BY SUE KERNAGHAN



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## NEW & NOTABLE

BY SUE KERNAGHAN



### GOLD FROM IDAR

A metal of myth and legend, gold is synonymous with wealth in many cultures. But chances are all the treasure of Midas and Alladin was not pure 24-karat gold. According to Victoria-based goldsmith and jeweller, Idar Bergseth, gold is usually alloyed with other metals to give it the tensile strength needed to hold a shape. The alloy also determines the look and colour of the finished piece. Yellow gold, for example, is typically alloyed with a blend of silver, copper, and nickel; white gold has more nickel in it, while red gold gains its rich colour from a copper alloy. Bergseth, who has created wearable art at his Fort Street shop in Victoria for more than 45 years, is one the few goldsmiths in North America who still hand-forges gold. [idar.com](http://idar.com)

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## HELIJET CREW

BY GARTH EICHEL

# HOME IS WHERE THE PARTS ARE

**ALLAN STACEY** didn't know what to expect when he emigrated to Canada from Auckland, New Zealand, in 1993 to marry his wife-to-be, Susan. He left behind all that was familiar to make a new life in a new country with a new partner.

Marriage agreed with Stacey, but Vancouver took some getting used to: "When I first got to Canada no one would hire me, mate," he says with a distinctive Kiwi twang. "I couldn't find work for months. Not even as a dishwasher.

"Then there were the Vancouver riots in 1994 after the Canucks lost the Stanley Cup. I didn't know what to think, mate. New Zealanders don't riot after the All Blacks lose!"

Things seemed grim, but then his wife spotted a help-wanted ad in the newspaper for an aircraft refueler with Pacific Heliport Services (PHS). Stacey applied and, lucky for him, the manager doing the hiring was an ex-military type who appreciated Stacey's service in the Royal New Zealand Army Ordnance Corps.

Shortly after being hired, Helijet acquired PHS and Stacey stayed on as a ramp services agent. Three years later he applied for a position in Stores, eventually becoming logistics coordinator for the company. In this role he is responsible for acquiring every item necessary to keep Helijet's aircraft flying.

Spare parts may not sound sexy, but they are critically important in the aviation industry because, unlike cars, airplanes and helicopters cannot be driven indefinitely until something breaks. The demands of flight safety are such that operators such as Helijet must have countless parts on hand at all times, many of which need to be rotated out for repair and overhaul on a scheduled basis.

As any business owner can attest to, too much inventory can be prohibitively expensive, while having too little can disrupt operations. The key is finding balance between the two, which is no mean feat in a company with a fleet of 15 helicopters and one Learjet.

"We like to have one spare for everything so we can keep all the aircraft flying at all times," says Stacey. "On any given day we have upwards of 1,500 items in stock — all the parts that keep our aircraft flying, from nuts and bolts to pilot uniforms and avionics."



*This fall Allan Stacey celebrates 20 years with Helijet, 17 of them working in the company's Stores department. Garth Eichel photo*

Some items are more important than others, but if there is one thing that can keep Stacey awake nights it's the thought of aircraft being grounded — AOG (Aircraft On Ground) — due to lack of critical parts: "If you don't have a part and an aircraft goes AOG, well, then you have a problem."

To avoid such situations Stacey fills his days by staying on top of inventory — shipping, receiving and buying aircraft parts and, when necessary, calling in personal favours from suppliers and a network of local contacts.

Being logistics coordinator for Helijet has its demands, but Stacey says he enjoys the inherent challenges and rewards the job offers:

"No two days are the same in Stores, mate. There's always something to do to keep 'em flying." He adds, "I get satisfaction from seeing our jets in the air." ✈️

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# OFF TO MARKET

New Digs for the Victoria Downtown Farmers Market

BY SUE KERNAGHAN

**IT'S HARVEST TIME** in downtown Victoria and the Public Market is hopping. A two-man string band plucks out old-time tunes while artisans hand out samples of goat cheese, herbal tea, and chocolate. Office workers and tourists queue for the next batch of chicken pot pies to come out of the oven at the Victoria Pie Company, or for thick sandwiches of naturally-raised beef at Roast. Along the market's central aisle, local condo dwellers chat with visiting farmers as they

browse for bouquets of kale, pints of blueberries, and ropes of garlic.

Last September, the Victoria Public Market at the Hudson opened on the ground floor of the city's historic Hudson's Bay building, bringing an indoor market to B.C.'s capital for the first time in a century.

The space, stripped bare to its cement floor and ceiling pipes, recalls the neo-industrial look of Granville Island or

*The Victoria Downtown Farmers Market moved indoors last year, becoming a year-round fixture in the historic Hudson Bay Building on Douglas Street. H el ene Cyr photos*

Seattle’s Pike Place. This market, though, is pure Vancouver island, home to such local foodie icons as Salt Spring Island Cheese, Silk Road Tea, and Cowichan Bay Seafood.

The Victoria Public Market leads a dual life: most of the week it’s a public market, with permanent vendors selling everything from kitchen gear to olive oil, spices, tea, baguettes and hot tacos. On Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays local farmers, food artisans and craftspeople also set up temporary shop, creating the Victoria Downtown Farmers’ Market.

I stopped in on a Wednesday, armed with an appetite and a shopping bag, to check out the wares. The week’s vendors included Cottlestone Apiary, with its wildflower honey, Nightingale Naturals’ hand creams, two chocolatiers and several local farmers.

Among them was Heather Robinson, who has been with the market since its previous location in Victoria’s Market Square. This week she has trucked in a cornucopia of goodies — huge heads of elephant garlic, purple-topped turnips, baby cauliflower, and bags of basil, chard, kale and broad beans — from Haliburton Community Organic Farm in Cordova Bay.

“We have a lot of regular vendors, and every week it gets better,” says Robinson.

“I love this market,” says Alex O’Brien from Sun Trio Farms. “It’s indoors, it’s bustling, and there’s a good mix of locals and tourists. It’s a great midweek market to stock up at.”

Prices are in step, too. Scanning Lockwood Farms produce I see their fennel, herbs, kohlrabi, and free-range eggs stack up pretty well against costs in my local supermarket at home.

Victoria’s market is just one of dozens of farmers’ markets that have popped up in parks and public squares across the province in recent years — up 62 per cent in a few short years, according to the BC Association of Farmers’ Markets (BCAFM), which represents 125 markets.

There’s been an outdoor farmers’ market in Victoria for years, most recently at Market Square, but the new indoor space is a game changer according to Maryanne Carmack,



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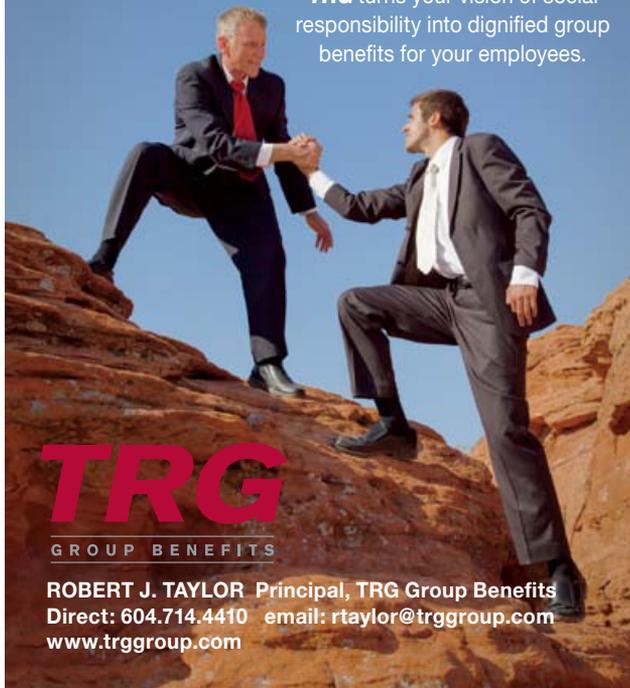


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Public Market General Manager: "Because they have a year-round outlet, farmers plant more, and plant year-round crops, so we're helping to expand their business."

The market has been a huge hit with shoppers, too. Especially so as Victoria's downtown core becomes increasingly residential.

The idea is to encourage locals to do their regular shopping here, rather than just stopping by for a fun day out. To make that happen, you need both core vendors and variety, says Carmack:

"You have to have a baker, a butcher, a fishmonger and a grocer so people can get all their shopping done in one spot," she says. "We have those four key tenants, and we also ensure that what we're adding is not generic."

In keeping with the market's catch-phrase "home-grown; hand-made", goods sold must be grown or made by the merchants themselves. And, although the market is open to vendors from anywhere in B.C., most come from roughly within a 30-kilometre radius of Victoria.

"You can be pretty sure that what you see here has just been picked," says Carmack.

Freshness, of course, is a major reason for choosing a farmers' market over, say, a chain supermarket. But equally important is the personal relationships shoppers can develop with growers.

"When you buy directly from the grower you know where your food is coming from," says Carmack. "You get to know the people who are growing your food, and you help support local farms."

The BCAFM's website lists 10 reasons to shop local, from fresher, tastier, healthier and more varied produce, to the environmental benefits of eating food that's travelled 30 kilometres, rather than 3,000, to reach your table. There is also the economic upside of supporting local farmers and strengthening food security.

Two more compelling reasons not listed on BCAFM's website are fun and free samples. The Victoria Downtown Farmers' Market, like markets throughout B.C., has a lot more going on than heirloom tomatoes. Most days, the market is jumping with live music, craft sales, art exhibitions, speakers, book signings, and more. There's even a community kitchen available for parties, chef demos, and such foodie events as ReWild Your Palate, an occasional all-foraged food dinner.

Ultimately, buying straight from the grower is all about connections, says Carmack: "People want to know their farmers and butchers and who they buy their eggs from; we're pleased we can offer that." 🐔

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BY STEWART MUIR

# FROM THE GROUND UP



## Can liquefied natural gas power B.C. forward?

**PRIOR TO THE 2013** provincial election, most British Columbians couldn't tell you what the acronym LNG stood for, or why it was important to the province's future.

Fast forward to the present and most B.C. residents now know LNG stands for liquefied natural gas. That's because the governing BC Liberals made LNG a pillar of their most recent re-election campaign. They went all in, betting the sale of LNG to Asia would fuel economic growth, erase \$63 billion in provincial debt, and generate revenue to pay for infrastructure and public services for generations to come.

But for all the optimism, a lot of variables remain, and LNG is not without its critics and opponents. Depending on who you believe, LNG could be the province's salvation, a missed opportunity, a threat to the environment, or a damp squib.

It is all rather confusing for the average British Columbian.

### WHAT IS LNG?

It is more accurate to describe LNG not so much as a product, but as a way to transport natural gas.

In British Columbia's case, the journey starts in the vast gas deposits straddling northeast B.C. and northwest Alberta,

which jointly contain 94 per cent of Canada's known gas reserves. Here, the resource is extracted from the ground via deep wells, 568 of which were drilled in B.C. in 2013.

As deep as 3,000 thousand metres beneath the surface, wells penetrate below the stone layers that have kept gas from escaping for millennia. The wells act like drinking straws into the gas-rich shale rock and are lined with thick cement designed to prevent leakage into surrounding drinking water aquifers.

Down the shale, the wells run horizontally, allowing pressurized liquid to be pumped into surrounding shale with such force it creates cracks, releasing the trapped gas. This process is known as hydraulic fracturing, often called fracking.

Tapping into B.C.'s gas reserves is one thing; getting it to market is another.

The plan is for private industry to transport the gas via pipeline to proposed LNG facilities on the West Coast where the gas will be cooled into a liquid, 600 times more compact than the gaseous state. It will then be loaded onto special LNG vessels and shipped to foreign customers for uses such as power generation, heating and manufacturing.



*Hopes are high that LNG will stimulate B.C.'s economy and generate billions of dollars in revenue to erase provincial debt and pay for infrastructure and public services for generations to come. Bigstock photo*

## ALL EYES ON ASIA

The U.S. has been Canada's primary natural gas buyer since 1957 when the first pipeline to the south opened. But recent discovery of America's own vast shale gas reserves means that country is increasingly becoming energy self-sufficient and therefore less dependent on Canadian gas.

the growing economies of Asia represent the greatest opportunity for BC LNG.

This is a huge problem for Canada, and B.C. in particular. In 2008 B.C.'s natural gas exports to the U.S. were worth \$7.5 billion. By 2013 gas exports were valued at just \$3.1 billion. Making matters worse, the price of LNG has fallen significantly on world markets in recent years.

Looking over the horizon, the growing economies of Asia represent the greatest opportunity for BC LNG. Instead of relying on a single export market to the south, B.C. has its eyes set on a cluster of buying nations that represent the world's fastest growing economies.

Paramount among these is the Chinese market. With 1.3 billion people and sustained economic growth, China is on track to become one of the world's largest LNG markets.

## DOLLARS AND SENSE

So who will pay to develop B.C.'s nascent LNG industry?

"Ultimately, it will be private capital, not taxpayer funds, that is exposed to the investment risks associated with major LNG projects," says energy expert Tom Syer with the Business Council of BC.

To date, more than \$2 billion dollars of private investment has been spent, and billions more committed, to pursue LNG opportunities in the province. As many as 17 proposals have been floated to build LNG export facilities on the West Coast, and the provincial government's goal is ultimately to approve up to as many as five of these projects, with three in operation by 2020.

The companies submitting proposals are a mix of big and small, old and new, foreign and local. They include small private ventures, Chinese state-owned enterprises, and so-called supermajor oil-and-gas companies such as Chevron, ExxonMobil and Royal Dutch Shell. The governments of Malaysia, Japan, Korea, India, Indonesia, Brunei and Australia are also major players in LNG facility project bids.

"Probably 12 to 15 of these projects will not be financed," says David Keane, a longtime industry watcher. "But I think four to five of these world-scale facilities will be developed. It's not unrealistic to see that."

## GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Even if just a few LNG projects go ahead, it would be a significant boost for the B.C. economy. The provincial government estimates that five LNG plants built between now and 2024 would result in 83,000 new direct and indirect jobs and industry investment of \$175 billion.

The fortunes of the governing BC Liberals largely depend on LNG stimulating the provincial economy, and delivering on the tens of thousands of LNG jobs foreseen by Premier Christy Clark during the 2013 provincial election campaign.

At the same time, the B.C. government is counting on LNG revenue through drilling-lease auctions, gas royalties, and corporate income tax. Other LNG-specific taxes are on the table, too.

Some project proponents have voiced objections to what they see as onerous taxation and are seeking concessions regarding tax relief. Industry as a whole is restless for a final tax formula to be resolved, imploring the provincial government not to “kill the golden goose,” as the head of one major offshore group stated.

Considering the timelines and investment required,

LNG proponents have to decide if their interests are best served in B.C. or somewhere else.

“These projects would be operational for several decades so our investment decision must take a long-term view,” says Madeline Whitaker, vice president of Prince Rupert LNG proponent BG Group.

Industry voices are also grumbling that government needs to clear the way for LNG: “A lengthy regulatory process for site permitting and supply pipelines has the potential to delay projects to the point where there is no market to supply,” opined one group of experts in a recent report on B.C.’s situation.

Still, many industry watchers are predicting at least one or two LNG decisions next year, if not sooner. In the meantime, every day without an announcement is another day before jobs start and royalties flow.



*The B.C. government predicts billions of dollars of LNG industry investment will create tens of thousands of new direct and indirect jobs throughout the province. iStock photo*

## GREEN GAS

Overall, the LNG industry sees opportunity and wants to invest in B.C. But getting British Columbians on board is another matter, especially when it comes to natural resources and energy projects.

Environmental lobbies have long had a strong voice in public decision making in B.C., with the province recently earning the rank of Canada's greenest province. That could change, according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which argues the climate-change impact of B.C. natural gas production and LNG exports to Asia could, by 2020, be equal to putting 64 million cars on the road.

Not everyone agrees with that. Defenders of LNG counter that increasing gas consumption in Asia would be a good thing for the overall health of the planet because natural gas is the cleanest burning fossil fuel available, and much cleaner than coal.

Currently, China burns more coal than any other country in the world, largely for power production. Last year the nation consumed more than 3.2 billion metric tonnes of coal making it responsible for up to a quarter of the world's CO2 emissions. The argument goes that

increasing natural gas consumption in China means less coal being burned.

For its part, the B.C. government has promised the cleanest LNG industry in the world. Just how remains to be fleshed out with exact criteria, but the province is said to be developing an emissions benchmark that proponents can meet through reducing facility emissions, purchasing offsets, or investing in a technology fund.

the LNG industry has a good record of maritime safety with more than 71,000 loaded voyages worldwide and no major incidents at sea, or in port.

"If B.C. is going to develop an LNG industry then the carbon footprint of the industry has got to be as small as possible," says Merran Smith, executive director of Clean Energy Canada.

In addition to concerns about emissions, there is also the contentious matter of drilling processes potentially releasing methane gas, contaminating drinking water aquifers, and causing seismic activity.

Industry notes that hydraulic fracturing technology has been around for over 60 years, and is regarded as a safe, proven and regulated drilling process. Moreover, new technology exists to capture — and monetize — escaping methane. Yet public concerns persist. Both industry and government have their work cut out.

Rick Chalaturnyk, an engineering professor at the University of Alberta, and a co-author of a report on fracking, urges transparency and oversight: "For large-scale shale gas development now, I don't think you want to be in a position anymore of just saying, 'trust me, we know what we're doing.' We're past that."

Another environmental choice is between using hydroelectricity or natural gas to power energy-hungry LNG facilities. Natural gas can be easily tapped from incoming supply, but burning it to create power creates an emissions impact. Alternatively, grid-supplied hydroelectric power is lower in emissions, but supply is not as plentiful.



*B.C.'s hopes for its LNG industry hinge on it being the cleanest in the world. Bigstock photo*



*For ease of transport, natural gas is cooled to approximately -162 degrees C causing it to condense into liquid form. It is then loaded onto modified LNG carriers for shipment by sea. Bigstock photo*

Then there is the question of whether LNG can be safely shipped by sea.

To date, the LNG industry has a good record of maritime safety with more than 71,000 loaded voyages worldwide and no major incidents at sea, or in port.

Moreover, LNG doesn't mix with water; it evaporates when it comes into contact with air leaving no chemical residue, unlike crude oil, which when spilled can cause devastating and long-lasting damage to marine environments.



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*Pacific NorthWest LNG is a proposed liquefied natural gas facility located on Lelu Island within the District of Port Edward. The project would generate significant benefits for northwest British Columbia and the rest of the province.*

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**PacificNorthWestLNG.com**

*An artist's rendering of the proposed Pacific NorthWest LNG facility. The final design and layout may differ from this image.*



*The Supreme Court of Canada's Tsilhqot'in First Nation ruling on aboriginal land rights is regarded by many as a "game-changer" for LNG in B.C. iStock photo*

## FIRST NATIONS FRONT AND CENTRE

A recent University of Calgary report found that First Nations' needs may impose additional project costs that could reduce the profitability and incentive for any given LNG project. Likewise, the Supreme Court of Canada's recent Tsilhqot'in First Nation ruling on aboriginal land rights caused concern in some circles that issues of land access and rights-of-way could reduce profitability and incentive for any given LNG project.

First Nations have signed economic agreements with a number of LNG proponents.

Others take a more positive read, seeing the ruling as providing a much-needed element of certainty for a long-unresolved issue, while also promising business opportunities and economic development for First Nations communities.

In fact, First Nations have signed economic agreements with a number of LNG proponents. The Douglas Channel Energy Project, 50 per cent owned by the Haisla

Nation, is an example of such a partnership, as is the agreement between Steelhead LNG and the Huu-ay-aht First Nations, which recently signed a development agreement to build a \$30-billion facility on its territory in Barclay Sound on Vancouver Island's west coast.

"It's something where First Nations can really take a leadership position so they can determine whether or not there is a risk, and whether that risk is acceptable," explains Huu-ay-aht councillor John Jack. "The onus is on everyone involved making sure that First Nations are directly involved in economic development."

## PIPE DREAM?

There are a lot of what-ifs surrounding B.C.'s hopes for LNG.

In global terms, LNG supply, demand and prices will fluctuate, often influenced by international developments beyond the province's control.

Things are no less daunting closer to home. Peter Severinson of the Resource Works Society sums up the challenges thus: "There's new pipelines to build, permits to get, regulations to navigate, First Nations to

consult, investments to gather, tax regimes to figure out, labour to secure, communities to engage, contracts to negotiate, facilities to build, and on and on. These things are not simple. But let's not forget that we have advantages too."

Severinson points to such things as B.C.'s proximity to markets, the quality of its gas reserves, trusted corporate and government institutions, and the West Coast's relatively low ambient temperatures, which makes it much cheaper to cool natural gas into liquid than is the case in hotter climates.

But perhaps the greatest advantage is the enormous scale of extractable gas in the province.



*By some estimates, B.C.'s enormous natural gas reserves could supply every American household for the next 225 years. Bigstock photo*

A red helicopter is flying over a vast, snow-capped mountain range under a blue sky. The scene is scenic and majestic.

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*If built, Pacific NorthWest LNG's proposed Kitimat project would generate significant provincial revenue through taxes and royalties, while creating up to 4,500 jobs during peak construction, as well as 330 careers during operations, and an additional 300 spin-off jobs in the community. Pacific NorthWest LNG illustration*

By one recent estimate, B.C. gas reserves are enough to supply every American household for 225 years.

*"We should be thinking about ways in which we can improve domestic consumption."* — Robin Austin, BC NDP MLA

It can also be put to good use here at home. MLA Robin Austin and his party, the BC NDP, are on record supporting LNG exports, but he says, "We should be thinking about ways in which we can improve domestic consumption. Frankly, we only use about four to five per cent of our [natural] gas, and yet we are constantly going to the gas stations to fill our trucks, our cars."

In any event, the energy specialists behind a recent University of Calgary study of B.C.'s LNG play delivered

a flinty-eyed analysis that sought no favour, dishing out plenty of criticism of tax plans and regulatory barriers. Even so, it was seen as particularly encouraging that these same minds issued a ringing endorsement of LNG overall, concluding: "If Canadian natural gas is sold on the open market, its cost and performance characteristics are economically competitive with projects elsewhere in the world."

As the LNG story unfolds, and with it the possibility of British Columbia's future path revealed, one thing is clear: it will become harder and harder to find someone in the B.C. who does not know what the letters LNG represent.

*Stewart Muir is a co-author of The Sea Among Us: Life and History of The Strait of Georgia, from Harbour Books, and executive director of the Resource Works Society* 🐟

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A close-up photograph of a man with dark hair and a light beard lying on a white towel. His eyes are closed, and he has a relaxed expression. Two hands are gently massaging his face: one hand is on his forehead, and the other is on his cheek. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the white towel and the person performing the massage.

INVIGORATE

BY GARTH EICHEL

# JUST BECAUSE

All the reason a man needs to go to the spa

**LIKE MOST MEN**, I am ambivalent about going to a day spa. While I certainly enjoy the luxurious grooming, my inner Marlboro Man is not quite sure what to make of it.

Perhaps that's because guys generally tend to be results and rewards oriented, whereas women can appreciate the sensorial experience.

I'm no different. On some level I feel the need to justify going for a spa treatment — a psychological hall-pass, if you will.

Or do I?

"You never need an excuse to come to the spa," says Anita Voorsluys, Sales Manager at the Willowstream Spa at the Fairmont Empress. "It's about self care and wellness, looking and feeling healthy and relaxed is all the justification you need. That's why our motto at Willow Stream is *Find Your Energy*. We truly believe that by taking the time for yourself to unwind your mind and your body, you will actually leave our spa feeling more energized."

Still, I demur. Somehow, the idea of treating myself to an afternoon at the spa seems self-indulgent, if not a tad metrosexual.

Voorsluys doesn't buy that: "You need to give yourself permission to take care of you. How you look and feel about yourself affects both your personal and professional relationships." She adds, "Men appreciate the value of main-

taining things in good working order and appearance, be it a home, boat or vehicle. It's not a huge leap to apply the same thinking to your self.

Indeed, attitudes towards male grooming are changing. More and more, aesthetic options for men are becoming socially and culturally acceptable, especially among younger men.

The irony is that it is the older generation who need it most. Men (and women) experience a profound physiological shift in their mid-30s. The salad days of youth give way to personal and professional responsibilities just when limitless energy reserves become decidedly limited.

Now in my 40s, I have less energy than I did 10 years ago, and too many summers in the sun have weathered my visage. As a professional I can't afford to look and feel tired, but keeping up with people half my age can be exhausting.

This is not to suggest I want to look *younger*. Rather, I want to look good for my age — healthy, refreshed and relaxed.

With that in mind I make an appointment for a sports massage, a facial and a manicure at the Willow Stream Spa.

While scheduling my visit at the spa, the staff invite me to arrive early to enjoy the Spa Ritual prior to my appointment. The Spa Ritual consists of a steam inhalation room,

sauna and thermal mineral pool, and is included with all spa experiences.

Wanting to ensure I took full advantage of my spa day, I show up an hour early and enjoy all the amenities the spa provides.

When the time comes for my sports massage I'm greeted in the guest lounge and guided upstairs to a treatment room by Cami, a lovely and professional massage therapist, who encourages me to "undress to my level of comfort" for my body treatment.

Uh oh. This is one of those moments men fear most coming to a spa. I'm not quite up for the Full Monty, so I opt for semi-nakedness, secretly praying that my body will relax like it should and not do anything "un-spa-like" — a real fear shared by most men during any type of bodywork.

Fortunately, Cami, like all the Willowstream's therapists, is thoroughly professional and I am properly draped throughout the treatment so I never feel exposed or awkward. I feel my tired leg and shoulder muscles relaxing in her expert hands, the tension flowing out of my mind and body. Soothed by the soft light of the room, gentle music, and scent of lavender, I soon find myself hovering in the twilight of consciousness.

An hour later I'm gently summoned out of my dreamy state and transferred to the care of Laura, an aesthetician who will perform my facial and manicure.

The face is perhaps the most overlooked part of the body for many men. We tend to neglect the overall tone and texture of our facial skin, not realizing that it can look and feel significantly healthier with straightforward treatment and products.

By the time Laura is finished steaming, scrubbing, massaging and moisturizing my face it feels fresh and revived in a way I didn't know possible. Who knew a facial could be so relaxing?

But we don't stop there. Moving to the manicure station she begins pruning my nails, nipping and tucking the rough edges before trimming loose skin and unsightly cuticles, followed by buffing and massaging. Now these are hands I would want to shake and do business with!

Reclining with a cup of hot tea in the Willow Stream Spa's lounge afterwards, I have a chance to reflect on the afternoon's treatments and consider the overall experience. There is no question that I look better than when I arrived, but just as important is how I feel. Gone are familiar feelings of stress and exhaustion, replaced instead by a renewed and refreshed sense of self.

And then it dawns on me that men don't need just cause to enjoy such treatments. Rather, we can enjoy them, well, just because. 🐾

  
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*Tea and scones after a walk on the Ogden Point Breakwater makes for a lovely ritual between flights on Helijet.*

## RITUAL REVISED

The Breakwater Cafe & Bistro offers something new in a familiar place

**AS MUCH AS I ENJOY** new experiences, there is something to be said for familiar rituals. In keeping with that, I still read the weekend paper in print, and I treat myself to one very tall and very cold martini every Friday night. Guilty pleasures rarely change.

But sometimes they do.

Years ago, when I lived in Victoria's James Bay neighbourhood, I used to walk to Ogden Point each morning, rain or shine. My reward afterwards was a pit stop at the Ogden Point Cafe where I'd enjoy a hot tea and a scone with real butter. I'd watch the ocean roll in, surf crashing against the seawall, and congratulate myself for having relocated from Ontario.

I fell out of the habit after moving across town to Esquimalt, but whenever I'm travelling on Helijet I still make a point of budgeting enough time before a flight to stop in for a tea and a scone at my old haunt.

In 2012 two entrepreneurial brothers, Michael and Adam Helm, acquired the coffee shop and revamped it as the Breakwater Cafe & Bistro. They overhauled the menu, put in a bar, enhanced the décor, and introduced live music on Wednesday and Saturday nights.

I wasn't sure what to make of it at first. Change is hard and I was psychologically attached to my tried and true coffee shop. Now it had a distinct West Coast pub-bistro feel to it.

But only in the evenings. Fortunate for me, it retains its familiar cafe vibe in the morning, shifting gears after 4:00 p.m. when drink service starts.

After a couple years of limiting myself to morning coffee visits, I opted to give the Breakwater Cafe & Bistro a shot for my ritual Thursday date night with my wife, Heather.

To work up an appetite we first walked hand-in-hand out to the end of the breakwater, soaking in the sights, smells and late day sun reflecting off the ocean. By the time we'd returned we

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*Breakwater Cafe & Bistro dishes up beautiful and tasty fish tacos served with mango salsa.*

were feeling peckish and the bistro promised plenty to satisfy.

I recognize a number of familiar favourites on the menu, such as New England clam chowder, lasagna and chicken pot-pie, but also a range of new and intriguing offerings.

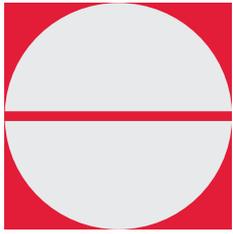
Heather loves her salads and immediately latches onto the red quinoa salad with sundried tomato, roasted walnuts, feta cheese and red pepper, drizzled with mango balsamic (\$10.50). The combination of tangy, sweet, nutty and savoury flavours is both light and refreshing. Perfect when paired with a chilled glass of Pinot Grigio.

Appealing as the range of salads are, I opt for something a bit more substantial in the way of fish tacos (\$10). Made with colourful and delicate chunks of red snapper, green coleslaw, and bright yellow mango salsa, these are perhaps the most attractive, if not tastiest, tacos to be found in the city. I wash mine down with a pint of pilsner from local Hoyne Brewing Co.

Both appetizers are enough to be meals in themselves, but entrées beckon. Impressed by my fish tacos, Heather orders the pecan-crust baked mahi mahi with yellow curry sauce, red quinoa and sautéed vegetables (\$15). Again, the flaky fish is perfectly cooked, its delicate flavour mingling with the nutty pecan crust, and a dollop of zippy yellow curry with just the right amount of zing.

Switching from seafood, I set my sights on the Pig + Prawn thin-crust pizza (\$14). Topped with prosciutto, prawn, roasted red pepper, arugula and béchamel sauce this is a pizza the begs the question: do they deliver?

The considerable size portions of both appetizers and entrées is such that the appealing selection of desserts is out of the question this evening. Nevertheless, I look forward to trying the sweeter offerings next time we return for dinner, which could well become a new ritual for us on Thursday nights. 🍴



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